

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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SUBJ: MOROCCAN-SOVIET FISHERIES AGREEMENT SIGNED IN MOSCOW

REF: (A) RABAT 2428, (B) RABAT 1786

BEGIN SUMMARY. MOROCCAN-SOVIET FISHERIES AGREEMENT, TEXT OF WHICH NOT YET AVAILABLE HERE, WAS SIGNED IN MOSCOW ON APRIL 27, 1978 BY GOM MINISTER OF COMMERCE REGHAYE AND USSR FISHERIES MINISTER ICHKOV. INITIAL LOCAL PRESS REACTION EMPHASIZES ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ADVANTAGES TO GOM, FOLLOWING CONTINUING GOM ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY AGREEMENT AS DE FACTO SOVIET ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARA TERRITORIES. AS EMBASSY REFTELS HAVE INDICATED, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SOVIETS ACCEPT THIS GOM CONSTRUCTION OF THE AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. LOCAL PRESS REPORTS THAT A MOROCCAN-SOVIET FISHING AGREEMENT (SEE REFTELS) WAS SIGNED IN MOSCOW ON APRIL 27, 1978, BY GOM MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ABDELKAME REGHAYE AND
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USSR FISHERIES MINISTER ALEXANDER ICHKOV.

2. ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIAL TEXT OF THE ACCORD HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC, LOCAL PRESS INDICATES THAT FINAL TERMS OF AGREEMENT CONFORM TO EARLIER EMBASSY REPORTING ON THIS ISSUE (I.E., REF B, PARA 2).

3. SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER "LE MATIN DU SAHARA" ACCORDED THE MOSCOW SIGNING FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE STATUS. TAKEN FROM AFP DISPATCHES, THIS ARTICLE STRESSED THE OPINION OF AN UNNAMED MOROCCAN DIPLOMATIC SOURCE THAT THE AGREEMENT IMPLIED DE FACTO SOVIET RECOGNITION OF MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARAN TERRITORIAL WATERS. NOTING THAT THE AGREEMENT ALLOWS SOVIET VESSELS TO FISH ALONG THE ENTIRE ATLANTIC COAST OF MOROCCO, THE GOM SOURCE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE SOVIETS QUOTE WILL GO WHERE THE FISH ARE AND THERE ARE MANY FISH IN SAHARAN WATERS UNQUOTE. AS NOTED IN REFTTEL A, PARA 1, GOM IS EXPECTED TO INTERPRET AGREEMENT AS TACIT SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF GOM SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARA. LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE TO DATE HAS CONSISTENTLY PROMOTED THIS OFFICIAL LINE.

4. PRO-GOM NEWSPAPER "AL MAGHREB" ALSO PUBLISHED FRONT-PAGE, BUT MUCH MORE SUBSTANTIVE ARTICLE FILED BY ITS MOSCOW CORRESPONDENT. FOLLOWING SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF AGREEMENT WERE NOTED:

- MOROCCAN-SOVIET COOPERATION IN FISHING IN MOROCCO' ATLANTIC FISHING AREAS.
- THE USSR WILL FURNISH, AT NO COST TO GOM, TWO RESEARCH VESSELS TO SURVEY FISH RESOURCES.
- A CONTINGENT OF MOROCCAN FISHING TECHNICIANS WILL BE TRAINED EACH YEAR AT SOVIET RESEARCH INSTITUTES, IN TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND ON BOARD SOVIET VESSELS.
- THE FORMATION OF MOROCCAN FISHING COMPANIES OF MIXED SOVIET-MOROCCAN CAPITAL, BENEFITTING FROM LONG-TERM SOVIET LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CREDITS, WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

- A JOINT FISHING COMMISSION WILL BE FORMED.
- THE USSR WILL FINANCE A STUDY OF THE MOROCCAN FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN ORDER TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A MOROCCAN-SOVIET FISH PROCESSING PLANT TO INCREASE PRODUCTION FOR THE SOVIET MARKET.

"AL MAGHREB" TERMED THIS AGREEMENT QUOTE AS IMPORANT AS THE SOVIET-MOROCCAN MESKALA PHOSPHATES AGREEMENT SIGNED IN MARCH 1978 UNQUOTE AND QUOTED GOM MINISTER OF COMMERCE REGHAYE AS DECLARING THAT THE AGREEMENT WILL INSURE THAT MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL WATERS ARE RESPECTED.

5. LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTY NEWSPAPER "AL BAYANE" NOTED THAT GOM SOURCES CONSIDERED THE AGREEMENT AS INVOLVING SOVIET FISHING IN QUOTE WATERS OF MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY UNQUOTE.

6. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT VIEW THAT USSR HAS ALTERED ITS POSITION ON GOM SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARA AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY AVAILABLE COMMENTS FROM MOSCOW.
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